

VZCZCXRO2666  
RR RUEHPA  
DE RUEHAB #0837 2091511  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 281511Z JUL 06 ZDK  
FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1672  
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 1399

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABIDJAN 000837

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/28/2016

TAGS: [IV](#) [PGOV](#)

SUBJECT: FPI WANTS CONSULTATIONS, NOT CONFRONTATION

Classified By: AMBASSADOR AUBREY HOOKS FOR REASONS 1.4 B.

¶1. (C) Senior members of President Gbagbo's FPI party have met twice with the Ambassador in the past week to discuss the issue of identification. They emphasized that they want to resolve their differences with Prime Minister Banny through consultations, not confrontation in the streets. They asked the Ambassador to persuade the PM to meet with them to discuss their concerns. The Ambassador has done that and the PM has agreed to meet them.

¶2. (C) The first meeting between the Ambassador and Affi N'Guessan, President of the FPI, occurred on July 21. N'Guessan was very defensive in his presentation of the FPI position. He asserted that the FPI supports the principle of mobile identification teams (MITs) but will go beyond boycotting to actively block the identification process until their demands for more consultations and more transparency are met. The Ambassador suggested to N'Guessan that the FPI had not formulated a clear message; he as a professional observer had difficulty determining whether the FPI was for or against identification. He proposed that N'Guessan state very clearly in his next speech or communique that the FPI favors identification and insists on a transparent process. N'Guessan said he liked that suggestion, and indeed in a communique published over the weekend, the first sentence stated that the FPI supported the identification process although the conditions the FPI proposed raise questions about the party leadership's sincerity.

¶3. (C) Early in the week N'Guessan requested another meeting with the Ambassador. He came to the Residence with four of his senior colleagues on July 26. He adopted a less defensive stance in this meeting. He stated that the FPI wanted to resolve their differences with the PM through consultations, not through confrontations between youth groups in the streets. He asked the Ambassador to persuade the PM to meet with the FPI to discuss methodology for carrying out the identification process. The Ambassador agreed to do so and met the following day with the PM to deliver this message; the PM is more than willing to meet with N'Guessan and his delegation. The Ambassador commented to N'Guessan and his colleagues that the FPI, having accepted the principle of identification, could legitimately raise questions about methodology, but that the FPI had to be reasonable in its approach. The political opposition and the Forces Nouvelles rebels also have the same right. They will all have to make compromises to keep the process moving forward. He also observed that the FPI delegation needed to listen as much as they talked when they met the PM; furthermore, such a meeting was for discussion, not for presenting militant positions. N'Guessan said he understood.

¶4. (C) In the interval between the two meetings, several clashes between FPI-associated Young Patriots and youth groups from the opposition occurred, resulting in at least one death and a number of wounded. The day of the second meeting the Young Patriots reached an agreement with

opposition youth to call a halt to the confrontations.

15. (C) A number of factors have contributed to the evolving FPI position, which may be more tactical and short-term than fundamental. The growing confrontations between the Young Patriots and an increasingly bold opposition have surprised the FPI. Furthermore, PM Banny is winning greater support from the population for the identification process, which he presents as a prelude to elections and the end to the political crisis. The FPI, which is a minority party, is increasingly uncomfortable playing the spoiler when it entails a loss of popular support. The threat of UN sanctions may also enter into the equation, although that is probably a minor factor. The FPI's hardline position is long-standing and reflects a determination to disenfranchise citizens in the North who are less likely to vote for the FPI. The FPI has dominated the political scene since the political opposition, traumatized by the killings of demonstrators in March, 2004, largely abandoned the street to the Young Patriots. That is now changing. Moreover, with the naming of PM Banny and the designation of a UN High Representative for Elections, FPI dominance of the political process is slipping. The FPI has thus resorted to blocking tactics, which they find are increasingly at odds with large segments of the population. They are looking for new ways to position themselves for the next elections.

Hooks